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The politics of language acquisition: language learning as social modeling in the northwest Amazon

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Researchers of language and society have given little attention to the significance of the language learning process in the reproduction of social roles and the values given them. Although anthropological linguists such as Elinor Keenan Ochs and Bambi Schieffelin have emphasized the importance of an ethnographic approach to language learning (Ochs 1982, 1988; Ochs & Schieffelin 1984; Schieffelin 1979; Schieffelin 1990; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986a, 1986b), most studies continue to focus on language acquisition *per se* and neglect the social modeling that universally accompanies the language learning process. This is particularly relevant in the case of gender roles in the northwest Amazon, where early language learning and the rules accompanying language use devalue mother's language, in particular, and women, in general.

This paper considers language acquisition within the greater context of gender-associated norms and practice among the Amerindian speakers of Eastern Tukanoan languages in the northwest Amazon,[1] where descent and language are viewed as manifestations of one another. There, an underlying ideology links linguistic performance to patrilineal descent and prohibits marriage between speakers of the same language. This paper argues that in the acquisition process, one language, father's, becomes standard and public; while another language, mother's, **becomes** non-standard and private. Processes of language learning in Eastern Tukanoan societies thus reproduce the asymmetries between men and women, furthering the male hold on linguistic proprietorship, a political resource that serves to maintain social power and to limit access to forms of communication that make sense of experience and create solidarity among speakers of the same language.

For speakers of Eastern Tukanoan languages in the northwest Amazon, language is not only a symbol matrix; it is itself a symbol, a marker of identity and a primary definer of identity and descent (Chernela 1993; Jackson 1976). Thus a linguistic-qua descent group, known as the "language group" (Jackson 1974, 1976, 1983), is the fundamental unit in a complex social structure. Marriages occur exclusively *across* language groups[2] (Chernela 1989, 1993; C. Hugh-Jones 1979, H. Hugh-Jones 1979) so that marital and kin ties unite some 14,000 speakers of diverse languages into a homogeneous culture complex over an area of approximately 150,000 km.[2]

The combined practices of marrying outside the language group, a phenomenon known as linguistic exogamy, and patrilocality, whereby a woman moves to the village of her husband, result in communities composed of a core of men and children who are same-language speakers and differently-speaking in-marrying women. In these communities, married women continue to speak their own languages while living among speakers of their husbands' languages. Children learn early to devalue the language spoken by mother and to value and identify with the language spoken by father. Speaking competence and rhetorical skill are prized in father's language – i.e., the language of one's own descent group -- but public demonstrations of mother's language are strongly sanctioned. Although children are competent in both mother's and father's languages they

must supress mother's language as they mature. Through linguistic modeling, then, mother's language is rendered private, sub-standard and stigmatized, while father's language is public, social, and dominant.

Studies of language learning in multilingual settings derive predominantly from situations where languages may be said to be "stratified." That is, a dominant speech pattern is regarded as uniquely authoritative and is typically taught as a second language (Appel and Muysken 1987; Grillo 1989; Gumperz 1971, 1978; Hudelson 1987; Lambert 1967; Macnamara 1967; Taylor, Meynard, and Rheault 1977). In the northwest Amazon, instead, linguistic dominance is context-dependent. On a systemic level no single language is consistently standardized. However, within a given village the language of the local descent group dominates. That which is regarded as the standard language, therefore, shifts from location to location. Because women marry out of their own linguistico-descent groups into those of their husbands, it is their languages that are subordinated. Although this does not constitute a case of linguistic stratification in its more common variant, implications for the politics of language and gender identity are far reaching.

Background

Speakers of the Eastern Tukanoan family of languages live in the region of the Uaupés River and adjacent areas along the frontiers of Brazil and Colombia. Some ten – fifteen[3] named groups speaking distinct languages make up the social universe. In this densely forested area, the principal forms of livelihood are farming, carried out by women, and fishing, carried out by men. Women farmers plant, weed, and harvest crops; they maintain complex botanical knowledge of the cultigens in their gardens and ensure daily sustenance for their families.

Within the Eastern Tukanaon family of languages, speakers of recognized linguistic variants constitute socially bounded groups. These groups (or "tribes") have been called "language groups" in the ethnographic literature (Jackson 1974, 1976, 1983). Members of a language group, regardless of sex, consider themselves to belong to one family based upon the principle of patrilineal reckoning from a mythical male ancestor. Offspring take their identity, without exception, from father. Each language group is further divided into smaller patrilineal descent groups which anthropologists call sibs or patriclans. Each

patriclan is associated with a position on the river, said to be its ancestral site. Villages, consisting of one or two resident descent groups, are arranged in settlements of up to 150 persons spaced about 5 miles apart along the river edge.

To put it another way, each village contains localized patrilineal descent groups who in turn belong to a larger, geographically dispersed entity, the language group. The members of a language group – regardless of distance between villages -- consider themselves to be closely related, with common language understood as a manifestation of their "blood" connection and sexual relations prohibited among them.

The linguist Arthur Sorensen (1967, 1973) identified 13 languages as members of the Eastern Tukanoan language family: Wanano, Tukano, Tuyuca, Yuruti, Paneroa, Eduria, Karapana, Tatuyo, Barasana, Piratapuyo, Desano, Siriano, and Kubeo.[4] I describe norms of linguistic performance and the language learning process from the perspective of one of the participating language groups of the Eastern Tukanoan family, the Wanano, located along the middle Uaupés River in northern Brazil.

Sorensen suggests that the member languages of the Eastern Tukanoan family are less closely inter-related than those of the Romance or Scandinavian groups While some of the languages referred to here may be sub-codes or dialects of one another, linguistic distance between languages is not taken up in this essay for two reasons. First, analytic distinctions between multilingualism and multidialectism are problematic (Gumperz 1971:101). Second, and more importantly, the socially-recognized differences between speakers of separate codes does not take into consideration the proximity of any one code to another.

Cultural Constructions of Gender

Speakers of Eastern Tukanoan languages regard themselves as descended from ancestral brothers born of the segmented body of a primordial anaconda. Each founding brother is the focal ancestor of a language group – conceived of as a patriclan -- whose members are spoken of as the "grandchildren of one man." One generation of brothers generates another through name exchange. Men structure descent and generational time, linking descendant with ancestor, present and future with past. Although women participate

in synchronic linkages, connecting different descent groups, they are absent from the descent model of reproduction.

It is believed by men that women can endanger and defile the intellectual rigor and spiritual discipline to which they aspire. Woman's anatomy is thought to be polluting and men feel they must protect themselves from female contamination. Men practice exercises, including purging rituals, to achieve desired states of mental and physical control. Among the displays of discipline expected from men is adherence to one language – the language of their patriline. The plurality of languages spoken by in-marrying wives substantiates, according to Tukanoan men, the chaotic influences of women.

In any village, conversation among married women is characteristically multilingual (polyglossic), while discourse among men and unmarried Wanano women is monolingual (monoglossic). Men inhabiting the same settlement are members of one language group, while in-marrying wives are speakers of Other, "outside," languages. In contrast to the monolingual interactions by men at the center of village life, women's performative interactions peripheralize them and accentuate their difference. In the Wanano village of Yapima, in which I conducted fieldwork, the eight in-marrying wives spoke five different languages.

In the context of the village into which she has married gender and linguistic distinctions doubly stigmatize married women. The practice of patrilocality furthers the solidarity of a resident male brotherhood and exacerbates the political subordination of women. The outsidedness of women is expressed both formally and semantically in women's speech (Chernela 1988a). The words of married women are potentially disruptive to the agnatic core. Their very outsideness imbues them with a power -- the power of chaos. As outsiders with no stake in the coherence of the agnatic core at the center of a local settlement, they have the potential to unhinge society (Chernela 1997). As "Others," i.e., individuals that are viewed as isolated and cut off from kin, they underscore the importance of attachment and social cohesion. Once married, the form in which women speak renders them disruptive,[5] or invalid, in the political forum.

Women's speech performances therefore constitute a meta-commentary on the problematic of women's lives. Upon marriage, Tukanoan women experience a death of

personhood even as they begin a new social life and personhood in another setting. The practice of patrilocal marriage separates women from their uterine communities. The allegiances of language and descent after marriage separate women from those closest to them -- spatially from their own descent group, conceptually from their children.

The situation reaches a critical juncture in the processes of language acquisition and transfer across generations, where a monoglossic condition must be reproduced from a polyglossic one. In the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next, every attempt is made to avoid hybridization, since it is considered essential that linguistic identities remain distinct and linguistic boundaries be kept stable.

Gender, Marriage, and Language

With patrilocal residence, the rapport established between a wife and her in-laws is critical to her well-being. Ideal linguistic circumstances for both partners occur when the preferred practice of patrilateral cross-cousin exchange is followed. Then, a woman marries a man who is a member of her mother's language group; she moves to the village in which her mother was raised and her mother's brothers continue to live. In this village her father-in-law is her *bachü* (uncle), a speaker of her mother's language. He calls her by the especially affectionate term *paka mak*o (niece) and speaks to her in the cadences of her mother's tongue, although she responds in her father's, i.e., her "own" language. In such marriages, a woman is said to be "marrying back" (Wanano: *kototaro tarikoro* for marriage exchange). Women who "marry back" are said to be "belongers" in the villages into which they marry, in contrast to wives whose mothers are not Wanano, and who are said to "mix" among "others" (Wanano: *sü'sari masono masa*). A woman's "belonging" may be interpreted in several senses. On the one hand, "belongers" are daughters of Wanano women, promised over generations to return as wives to Wanano male offspring. The new wife has returned in yet another sense. She returns to the familiar cadences of her mother's language (Chernela 1988a, 1993).

When a woman marries her father's sister's son, she is called *papuko* by her mother-in-law, whom she reciprocally calls *wamanyo.* In this case, her mother-in-law is a speaker of her own language. These women are not said to "belong" nor to "marry back" but their linguistic challenge is eased by sharing a common language and kinship links to

husband's household. There is a great deal of variation in the degree to which the preferred pattern is adhered to. In part, it is a function of the availability of preferred partners. If the preferred situation (e.g. cross-cousin exchange) constituted the majority of cases there would be less polyglossia than would be predicted based on the requirement of linguistic exogamy alone.

When a marriage does not follow one of the two preferred forms, a wife may marry into a home in which there are no speakers of either her mother or her father's languages. For example, a man may marry a woman of a language group other than his own whose mother is neither a member of his father's language group nor whose father is a member of his mother's language group. This marriage would not be incestuous, having fulfilled the regulation of linguistic exogamy, but it would not be preferred. In the Wanano village of Yapima, only one marriage was outside either preferred category, and it was the second marriage for both partners. The Cubeo-speaking wife was unable to comprehend the languages (Wanano and Tukano) of her father-in-law and mother-in-law, and they were unable to comprehend her language, Cubeo. She was, however, able to converse with several wives who knew Cubeo as third or fourth languages. When I left Yapima, this Cubeo wife was increasing her knowledge of Wanano, the language of her in-laws.

Language Acquisition

Ochs and Schieffelin have persuasively shown that children's language development is socially and culturally organized (Ochs 1982, 1988; Ochs & Schieffelin 1984; Schieffelin 1979; Schieffelin 1990; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986a,b). A Tukanoan child learns quickly that there is more than one linguistic subcommunity within his social environment, an essential lesson of Uaupés language development and social modeling. The added burden placed on the language-learning child by the Tukanoan system is a measure of the great value placed on linguistic separation by Tukanoans, as exemplified here by Wanano, society.

A child learns the languages of both his mother and father but is discouraged from speaking his mother's language as he matures. The process of directing a child's learning toward father's language is of particular interest since an infant is raised in the constant company of his mother. Mothers hold infants in a simple shoulder sling or carry them on

the hip until the child is ready to explore crawling or walking short distances. A child stays close to mother's side until it is mature enough to join the active horde of village children. Yet, even after the child joins the juvenile pack, he or she continues to spend long hours alongside the mother, accompanying her at work in the fields or at home. Gardening is a daily task lasting 4-6 hours, and children generally accompany their mothers far from their peers.

Fathers, by contrast, spend much less contact time with their children. Until adolescence, male work is not considered children's domain, even for young boys. Although Wanano are affectionate and conscientious fathers, raising children is considered by household members -- and by the husband and husband's mother in particular -- to be the responsibility of the child's mother.

It is important to note, therefore, that mothers typically maintain monolingual communication with children in own language. Within the household, only father, siblings, and father's father speak Wanano. Father's mother is never a Wanano speaker, and, as we have said, is likely to be a speaker of a child's mother's language.

Exposure, therefore, to mother's language is extremely strong in the early language-learning years. Given the constant exposure to mother's language, it is not surprising that in earliest language learning a child attempts to repeat the sounds spoken by his mother. However, at the earliest stages of recognizable utterances, a child is deliberately directed away from mother's language and toward father's. This is accomplished through several means. One of the most straightforward forms is overt instruction. In the villages in which I lived and visited, both mother and father corrected or repeated a child's vague utterance in the correct form for father's language. When, in the early years of linguistic development, a Wanano child experimented with a sound, or attempted a word in mother's language, the listeners repeated, with emphasis, the utterance in the target father's language. If a child persists in using mother's language, he or she was reproached.

A case in early language learning

This process is illustrated in a case I documented during my 18-month research stay in the Wanano Village, Yapima. When, early in my visit, a one and one-half year old

toddler produced unshaped utterances, each attempt was guided toward father's language. In most cases the intention of the infant speaker was not discernable: the utterance could have as convincingly been a repetition of mother's language as of father's. Even so, in every instance the utterance was interpreted and repeated as father's language. (This process is similar to a child's repetition of the syllable *-mu* to have the English-speaking parents exclaim that it represents his early pronunciation of Mama or Mother.)

The child's mother, Wito, was a member of the Tukano language group with strong linguistic loyalities to the language of her group. Although Wito's own mother was Wanano, and Wito showed speaking competence in Wanano when correcting and instructing her daughter, she did not use Wanano in ordinary conversation.

The following examples are intended to serve as paradigmatic illustrations of three types of interactional instruction observed over four months in one household:

Type 1 Child's Tukano is corrected with Wanano:

As the child's utterances became increasingly discernable, a distinct corrective substitution was applied. This common form of correction is shown in the following example, taken from observations:

1.1 Child: *mba'a*

1.2 Mother: [correcting] *chü-gü*

In this case the child pronounced the imperative form of the verb "to eat" (and thus, "Eat!") in Tukano. It seems clear that the child is repeating an oft-heard phrase, the command "to eat," in mother's language. The mother, however, corrects the child, substituting the correct Wanano to convey the same meaning. The Tukano-speaking mother recognizes the child's intent, but indicates that the preferred choice is father's language.

If a child persists in using mother's language, a mother may feign incomprehension. The following example illustrates such a case:

Type 2 Child speaks in Tukano; mother feigns incomprehension. Pointing to a phonologically similar term in Wanano, Mother asks if that is what child means. Example:

2.1 Child: *ü'ano*

2.2 Mother: (teasing) *ko'ano?* (meaning bone in Wanano-- mother suggesting that she does not understand her meaning when the child speaks in Wanano.)

The child has attempted *ü'ano*, Tukano for bath. The mother teases the child, repeating a Wanano word that is phonologically similar. The word is *ko'ano*, meaning bone -- and the association is ludicrous. Mother has shown that the child's communication in Tukano will not be recognized by her. In doing so, she recognizes the belongingness of her child to the Wanano descent group and the necessity of his manifesting that belonging in linguistic performance.

Type 3 Mother repeats a term that may be either Tukano or Wanano, altering the pronunciation to the correct Wanano.

Often, Tukano and Wanano alternatives are phonologically close. In cases where Tukano and Wanano terms resemble one another, the mother repeats the term, altering the pronunciation to the correct Wanano. The term for head, for example, is *dihpu* in Tukano and *dahpu* in Wanano. When the child's pronunciation is closer to the Tukano, the mother repeats the word with the competent Wanano pronunciation. In the case of the cognates *dihpu* (Tukano) and *dahpu* (Wanano), for example, the mother gently "nudges" the child away from the high front vowel in *dih* of the Tukano pronunciation toward the Wanano phoneme, *dah.*

Language Learning and Affect

Two additional forms of correction, reprimand and ridicule, are also used in language socialization. Because his child's performance in mother's language reflects his own identity, fathers sometimes react emphatically to a child who persists in performing in mother's language. I saw fathers correct even vocables or nonsense syllables from mother's language to father's.

In the patrilocal household a father and his close relatives can place responsibility on the child's mother for proper child rearing, making a child's language development a source of household conflict. If a child is especially sensitive, his deep sense of shame may inhibit his linguistic progress. The case of Pabi, reported by his parents, illustrates the possible impact of correction on a sensitive child. When Pabi spoke his first recognizable terms of address for mother and father, they were in Tukano, the language spoken by his mother. His Wanano father, Duse, showed strong disapproval and insisted the boy speak his "own" language (Wan., *müya dühküare*).

In response to the strong correction, Pabi stopped speaking between the ages of two and three.[6] When he resumed speaking, after approximately one year, it was in Wanano. According to his parents, since resuming speech at age three Pabi speaks only Wanano. I stayed in Duse's home. When Pabi awoke with fright, his mother reassured him in her language, Tukano. Although crying, Pabi responds now in Wanano even to heavily affect-laden, Tukano-uttered reassurances.

The play cohort of children in the village provides another context in which the values of monolingual performance are strongly reinforced. A Wanano settlement is regarded as belonging to a language group, where language is an aspect of relationship and place. Peers, in the form of siblings or village playmates, ridicule a child who does not speak with consistency the language of the local descent group.

Girls are not exempt from the rule of exclusive performance in father's language. One girl, suddenly frightened while playing among friends, shouted a vocable that signals pain in her mother's language. Caught by surprise, the girl ran from her playmates in shame and hid several hours. The mother reports that she took special care to not repeat the mistake again.

One part of this elaborate and socially-embedded ideology of language, is the belief that the well-developing child learns to speak his/her father's language with consistency, and will have the self-discipline to refrain from speaking mother's language, a language it is well understood that he/she knows. The well-bred and mature child speaks only father's language, and any deviation from this detracts from the child's respect among adults and peers.

Speech, Gender, and Norm

Despite ideals of linguistic loyalities, both women and men do occasionally switch to mother's language in order to preserve communication, but such accomodation is regarded differently by men and women. A survey I conducted on context and performance of mothers' language revealed a patterned difference in responses of women and men.. Adult women reported context-specific strategies, with comprehension and linguistic loyalties both factors influencing language choice. Men, on the other hand, reported exclusive performance in own language, regardless of setting. To the question, "Which language did you speak when visiting the village of your wife's parents?" all Wanano males reported speaking own language exclusively, even when this might have reduced communicability. Responses from the wives of these men showed disagreement with husbands' accounts. According to the wives of men who denied shifting, these men did occasionally switch to wife's language in the village(s) of wives' relatives when comprehension was not otherwise possible. This pattern of difference in the reports of men and women supports the notion that males do consider performance in mother's language counter to their presentation of self but can and do accommodate to a community of speakers of wife's or mother's language when comprehension is an issue and when distanced from own sib-mates or other Wanano males. The survey also suggests that men are competent speakers in their mothers' languages, despite a reluctance to demonstrate it.

Discussion

mother tongue/father language: first and second language learning

The criteria used to distinguish "natural"/first from "acquired"/second languages are the degree to which the process of language learning is spontaneous or guided. A number of researchers apply the term "learning" to refer exclusively to guided or tutored language learning, reserving the term 'language acquisition' to refer to the spontaneous process, occuring in social, or so-called "natural," contexts (for discussion of these matters see Beebe 1988; Klein 1986; Krashen 1981). In this paper, I use the terms "acquisition" and "learning" as stylistic variants, and accentuate, instead, the specific factors that differentiate specific processes. The differentiation assumes two fundamentally different operations (Krashen 1981) despite overlaps in processes of language acquisition and learning.

The distinction between "natural" [=first] and tutored or guided [=second] speech acquisition, for example, is fruitful insofar as it distinguishes distinctly different processes. A critical feature in distinguishing these two processes is context-dependency. The process of speech acquisition is called "natural" or spontaneous when it occurs in a social environment in which it is actually spoken and embedded in activity. "Guided" language acquisition, on the other hand, describes a process in which the language itself is the subject of communication, extricated from a relevant situational context and goal-oriented activity. "Guided" language acquisition at its most extreme is characterized by language instruction apart from any context in which it is used, such as a school setting. This type of guided tutoring delimits linguistic resources available to the learner. In its extreme form, guided second language acquisition has been seen as a derivative, the domestication of a natural process (Klein 1986; Krashen 1981, 1982). This latter is an important factor distinguishing the two.

As many authors now agree, and as the Tukanoan case illustrates, most language acquisition, whether first or second, combines features of both "natural" and "guided" acquisition. Recognizing that most language learning is a synthesis of the two, I make use of the terms as traits that describe and contrast process, not language. This enables one to describe both types of processes, allowing them to occur in combination and to analyze the extent to which one or the other prevails in any given context.

We may say that a language is "first" if no other language was acquired before; otherwise, it is second. A Tukanoan child is exposed to at least two languages from birth. This complicates the distinctions between "first" and "second" languages, since no one language has chronological precedence over the other. Yet the two acquisition processes, while in parallel, differ from one another.

In the case of the Eastern Tukanoan language learning, mother's language acquisition is "natural" or spontaneous insofar as it is embedded in everyday routine and is free from systematic guidance or intentional intervention. By contrast, father-language acquisition shares features with both spontaneous and guided language learning. An essential aspect of spontaneous language learning is the focus on activity and

communication as a means to accomplish ends, rather than attention to the language *per se*.

In the Tukanoan case, father-language acquisition, in contrast to mother-language acquisition, draws attention to language itself as a phenonemon, and to speech as "proper" or "improper." While father language acquisition also takes place in everyday settings, and in this sense may be considered naturalistic, it is systematically guided. Here, the term "guided," as opposed to spontaneous, refers to the relative degree of systematic and intentional influence, including prompting the learner or correcting "errors." (In this sense it may be said that father-language acquisition shares features associated with "second language acquisition" or "learning.")

A general problem in the bifurcation between first and second language acquisition processes is that it is only without ambiguity if the acquisition of the second language begins when the first is complete. If a different language is learned before the acquisition of the first is completed the distinction becomes blurred.

The case discussed here reveals some of the assumptions related to the two concepts "first" and "second" languages. A fundamental assumption, brought into question by data from the Eastern Tukanoan case, is that first language acquisition is primary (and thus native) in terms of both sequence and import. The assumption holds that through the acquisition of first language, the infant becomes a social being (Klein 1986:4). According to this belief, the social identity of the language learner is fixed during first language acquisition, creating a potential obstacle to second language learning (Gardner 1985). The theory, and the Tukanoan case to the contrary, raise interesting questions regarding the interelationships among cognitive, social and linguistic aspects of human development.

In the Eastern Tukanoan case, I find the more analytically useful choice the notion of relative dominance. The Eastern Tukanoan case is one of extreme functional specialization of language. Each of the two languages learned in infancy is associated with a specific person or group of persons (mother and mother's paternal relatives), location (mother's village and the villages of mother's descent group), and set of activities (infant rearing, marriage, in-law relations). The task for the Tukanoan child/learner is to abandon

the one verbal communicative system in which he has made progress, in favor of a different, socially-acceptable one.

The two languages are not acquired at an even pace. In the shift in dominance of one Tukanoan language over another, the extent of interference by means of direct instruction plays a significant role in the earliest stages. The transfer to father language is complete only when the learner interacts regularly with other youngsters of the village, all of whom are speakers of the same language and descent group. When a child plays with peers, older playmates, or siblings, father's language gains immediate and special advantage over mother's. Pressure from peers is a key factor in pushing forward the father-language acquisition process. It is at this point that guided and spontaneous language acquisition enter a mutual relationship and the language formerly "guided" enters a vigorous, naturalistic milieu. It is in the context of childplay that father's language takes on meaningful and purposeful communication. Social identity is obtained here during father language acqusition, a process that is later than mother-language acquisition, and is the more guided of the two. Exemplifying the important point that child's language development is shaped by cultural factors (Ochs 1982; 1988), Tukanoan language learning reverses the tendency by the infant to identify with the language of affect, the language of mother. Rather than second language acquisition as domestication of an earlier, "natural," process (Klein 1986:28-29), the transfer from mother-language to father-language is the inverse: it is the "naturalization" of the guided process.

The dominance of father's language over mother's extends eventually to all arenas of social use, and, ideally, results in the total decline in production of mother's language. Father language, unlike a "second language," does not become another tool of communication alongside the first language. Instead, it replaces or eclipses mother's language. As father's language gradually becomes dominant, mother's language becomes a "secondary" language, limited to comprehension rather than production.

Processes of language acquisition among Eastern Tukanoan speakers are extremely relevant to issues of first and second language learning. Some of the fundamental principles mastered in mother language acquisition, especially those rooted in early cognitive development, may be available in father language learning.

The extent to which conscious metalinguistic reflection (thought given to linguistic forms and rules) influences father language instruction and acquisition is a subject little considered and worthy of close investigation. In spite of the fact that Eastern Tukanoan languages may be less closely related than languages of the Romance or Scandinavian groups (Sorensen 1967), it is likely that the Eastern Tukanoan languages have more than a few shared features. Furthermore, some of the features held in common may be as fundamental as syntactic rules, modality, person, and underlying concepts and mechanisms of contextuality. A learner may understand that the notion "fire" has two phonological realizations. Or, a learner may substitute a phonological structure for one that is prior and generative. The child's knowledge of mother-language may influence the acquisition of father-language in much the same way that a learner acquires a second language, as the cognitive prerequisites of language mastery evolve for the Tukanoan child in a stage of comprehension that precedes father language performance. Features of father-language that coincide with corresponding features of mother-language are probably assimilated with relative ease by the child as a result of transfer of rule or lexicon from one language system to another.

That these principles are mastered and more readily available in second language acquisition than in first language acquisition is an important distinction between the two learning processes. The Tukanoan case is complicated, however, when the first language becomes reserved for comprehension, and the second, for performance.

Devaluation, repression, and privatization of mother-language

For speakers of Eastern Tukanoan languages, emotional alliance shifts in the course of language acquisition and development. In effective linguistic socialization, a child learns to accept the differential values placed on mother's and father's languages and to fear the negative consequences of uttering mother's language. In the construction of personhood, then, what becomes of mother's language?

Separation of a child from the production or identification with mother-tongue is not easily accomplished. Emotional attachments between mothers and offspring develop from, and become intricately tied to, linguistic expression. Attitudinal factors play an important

role in linguistic acquisition and competence. Moreover, they reflect socially important decisions which are reproduced in language acquisition in every generation.

Tukanoan infants often nurse until a younger sibling is born, and it is not unusual for a child under two years of age to spend almost all his or her time in the mother's company. Linguistic development, which reaches a critical point at approximately two, then becomes a vehicle for a concomitant psychosocial separation from mother.

The specific barrier to spoken bilingualism among the Tukanoan Wanano is the fear that if one speaks one's maternal language, one will be ostracized. Implied is the sense that a child who speaks mother's language is infantile. Furthermore, to speak mother's language is to be like mother, and therefore unlike one's kindred and peers. More explicitly, a child is threatened with open reproach if he or she utters mother's language or mixes it with father's language.

Language learning for the Tukanoan speaker is therefore an early form of mother-separation. Apart from whatever emotional correlates may or may not attach to this process, the distinction between self and mother has social-structural implications and consequences. It distances and separates, at an early age, that which is mother, from that which is self. As the alignment of like and unlike self is established in the course of Tukanoan language acquisition, mother becomes quintessential "other."

Marriage to a mother's brother's daughter or son, a preferred form of marriage, assures a man or woman a spouse who is member of mother's language group, and thus a speaker of mother's language. For those who follow this preferred pattern, mother's language will become spousal language at marriage. The language once associated with the intimacy of infant-mother becomes the language of intimacy between spouses. It may be surmised, further, that through such division, mother-language becomes the language of affect and libido, while the father language remains the language of norm and authority.

Father language and social boundaries

The case of the northwest Amazon is of interest to students of gender and language, since early linguistic modeling influences gender identity and evaluation. A child is raised learning both mother's and father's languages but is socialized <u>not</u> to speak one of them. The situation is modelled for the child when people speak back and forth in two

languages. Yet the child must learn to distinguish the two languages and discern which is appropriate to verbalize and which not. Overt instruction provides the child signals that mother's tongue has no social or public value.

Among Eastern Tukanoan speakers, linguistic loyalty, in which each speaker adheres to his or her own affiliating language, leads to polyglossia in the case of women's discourse management but to monoglossia for men. This is explained by the dispersal of women at marriage into communities where languages other than their own are spoken, a phenomenon described by Wanano Tukanoans as "mixing," *sü'sarin*e (Chernela 1988a, 1993, 1997).

Descent group speech norms do not favor code switching. The notable exception to this is the behavior of women in the roles of mothers who are expected to model in husband's language for the learning child. In the act of mothering, an essential dialectic is revealed. While speakers of all Eastern Tukanoan languages are capable of "polyglossia," the linguistic pluralism of Tukanoan women is a salient part of what it means to be a woman.

The acquisition of father-language among Tukanoan speakers shares some of the structural characteristics associated with the processes involved in learning what Bakhtin has called "authoritarian" language, *avtoritetnoe slovo.* In the social reproduction of the speech community father's language is canonized as authorized discourse, demanding the "unconditional allegiance" recognized by Bakhtin (1981:343) as requisite to the social production of a unified, or undiversified language – the *odnojazycie* -- here translated as monoglossia.

While Tukanoan fathers are not, relatively speaking, harsh parents, the association of father language with rule, legitimacy, and correction is key to understanding Tukanoan father-language acquisition, and, by extension, the maintenance of Tukanoan social boundaries.

The Tukanoan case well exemplifies the opposing centrifugal and centripetal pressures pointed to by Bakhtin in his theory of dialogicality in language. The multiple languages spoken by the in-marrying wives in an Eastern Tukanoan settlement tends to shift community speech toward polyglossia. In contrast, the norm of linguistic loyalty,

predicated upon a rule of language reproduction that follows patrilineal descent, moves speech toward monoglossia. Here, the language of the resident patriclan may be said to function as the language of authority, or "father-rule." It is Lacan's "straight speech." Through the preservation of patri-language and the production of paternally-modelled, language-bearing, social beings, the hegemony of the patriline is reproduced.

Thus, processes of language learning in Eastern Tukanoan societies reproduce the asymmetries between men and women. Men hold linguistic proprietorship, a political resource that serves to maintain social power. Linguistic proprietorship by men has two important consequences: first, that men and women's language use is differently evaluated, and second, that the sexes have unequal access to forms of communication that make sense of their experiences and create solidarity (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2002 (orig. 1992); Kramarae 1981; Kramer 1975; Henley and Kramarae 1991; Philips, Steele, and Tanz 1987; Spender 1999 (orig. 1980); Thorne, Kramarae, and Henley 1985).

Female solidarity is clearly undercut in the Tukanoan case, and reflects a pattern found elsewhere in the Amazon basin. In discussing the myth of the “Monstrous Women,” a ritual enacted by Kalapalo women in Central Brazil, Ellen Basso points to the message that collective solidarity among members of the same gender is antithetical to social life. Intragender solidarity, then, is regarded by Kalapalo males as a violation of norm (Basso 1987:166). The prohibition on solidarity serves as an insight into the power of communicative acts that allow expression and produce solidarity among women (see Elshtain 1981; Gal 1991; Keenan Ochs 1992; McConnell-Ginet 1988; Philips 1980).

Conclusions: women’s speech and the production of community

The process is more complex, however, when the unit of analysis is not the language group alone, but the larger intermarrying community. In spite of the lack of solidarity, or because of it, the speech acts of women may be recognized as the social linkages from which emerges society itself. While linguistic norms limit the social cohesion of differently-speaking Tukanoan women at the local level, the role of women’s speech at the more inclusive level of intermarrying descent groups shows it to be fundamental. While women and men both perpetuate linguistic distinctions through loyalty to the language of

one's patriline, it may be argued that women's ongoing heteroglossia constructs a supralocal speech culture.

Ties of intermarriage result in a coherent and homogenous cultural complex, integrating separate and often distant, patrilineal language groups. The production of a shared system of meanings, despite the conservation of different codes, is accomplished through the linguistic acts of married women whose movements in space and whose diverse speech performances link and knit otherwise separate entities into one homogenous, multilingual culture. The shared common beliefs and presuppositions that are taken for granted as part of a common ground are created in and by the communicative acts of women, whose linguistic origins are diverse. It is the work of women to construct the shared meanings that constitute the Tukanoan social universe.

Notes

[1]This study is based upon field research conducted between 1978 and 1981 in the Brazilian (southeastern, or downriver) section of the Uaupés basin. I describe the social organization of the area from the perspective of one of the participating language groups of the Eastern Tukanoan family, the Wanano, located on the middle Uaupés River in Brazil.

[2]The Cubeo (Goldman 1963), Makuna (Århem 1981, 1989), and Arapaço (Chernela 1988b, 1989; Chernela & Leed 2001) are exceptions to the pattern of strict linguistic exogamy.

[3]The number of groups varies according to definition of area.

[4] In addition, two Arawakan-speaking groups, the Tariana and the Baniwa, participate in the system of marriage exchange and linguistic exogamy.

[5]Although women have no voice in village politics except through the subversive forms of gossip or the leverage they hold in their power to bring shame to the families of their husbands, women do, in fact, excersize power effectively through these indirect means.

[6]Whether the case of Pabi is exceptional is difficult to evaluate. Silent periods often accompany bilingual learning and strong correction.

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